

DENE NATION NATIONAL ASSEMBLY, FORT FRANKLIN, JULY/85

LIBRARY REPORT

Presented by Alice Abel, Library and Information Officer/Dene Nation

Good evening, Chiefs, elders, delegates, and ladies and gentlemen.

There are two people working in the Dene Nation Library, myself Alice Abel, Library and Information Officer/Dene Nation and Leith Peterson, Library and Information Officer/Dene-Metis Negotiations Secretariat. Leith was hired in November/83 to train me in native library work and to assist with reorganizing library services.

Before I took this library training program, I hadn't thought a lot about libraries. When I first decided to go into the Yellowknife Public Library about 3 or 4 years ago, I felt kind of strange to be there because I thought it was mostly for non-native people to use. Besides I wasn't interested in reading books, didn't know how to use the library, didn't know how to use reference books and, most of all, I didn't know the importance of the library.

Now after successfully completing a 1½-year training program, I have learned a lot about the use and importance of libraries--native and non-native. It is very important to encourage our children and also ourselves to use the library. By using the library, we can increase our reading ability, we can gain more knowledge of the modern society, and, at the same time, we can learn more about our Dene cultural identity, in order to survive in this society.

Leith and I have done a tremendous amount of work in the establishment and development of the library, which has been fully in operation since November, 1983. There has been a great improvement in the library's appearance and organization as a result of a concerted effort by the library staff to provide efficient information services.

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SYNAGOGUE OF AMERICA WENT TO BETHUE AND ODEON WITH REPORT

The library deals with published, but mostly unpublished material, reports, minutes of meetings, material written by Dene Nation staff and consultants, important historical and cultural materials, audio cassettes, reel-to-reel tapes, video cassettes, annual reports, books, periodicals, newspapers, newsletters, reference books, etc. We have succeeded in organizing a large portion of this material in subject arrangement. The records are very important to the Dene, and will become increasingly more important and valuable over the years. This unique and valuable information is of long-term significance to the Dene people in terms of the present situation and is consequently of historical and archival importance for the future generations.

At the present time, it is difficult for the library staff to serve the public, as some of the library materials are not for public use. It would be a lot of work initially, but we could separate the confidential material from the non-confidential material, so that a public relations section would be created. We have found it hard to turn away people, especially native students looking for material about their history. Some of these native students may someday be great leaders for the Dene people.

HOW DO NATIVE PEOPLE FIT INTO THE FUTURE OF THE DENE NATION LIBRARY?

Native people must be able to develop their own libraries in their own way. The non-native way is not designed for native materials. The development of library services for the use of native people must be in the hands of native people in order to provide better and more efficient services to meet their needs. So, it is very important for native students to get trained in library and information services. Why? Because if the Dene are talking about self-government, then we have to control our own information and resource materials, such as preserve and enhance our cultural values and traditions, history, language, education, economics, health, etc. This is the kind of information which will give the Dene struggle more power. Information is a powerful tool. To ignore the power of this tool is to weaken the development self-government. If we don't take control over our own information needs, then the non-native people will, like anything else.

I know that some of you don't know much about libraries, or don't use them. But the Dene are talking about self-government. If they are seriously concerned about self-determination and self-government, then now is the time to recognize that the backbone of any effective government is a good library and filing system. An effective and continually-operating library can increase the political and cultural awareness of the Dene people. There is great need for more trained Dene staff in the library and additional funding is required in order to make this library available to all native people and their supporters. The library is a long-lasting tribute to the Dene--their history and their struggle--and will be a major educational resource for future generations.

The Dene traditions is an oral tradition. However, our future depends upon the children and youth of Denendeh. If we really care about our children and youth, then we must continue to put information about the Dene struggle on papers and tapes. Some of these tapes and transcripts are the only records of the wisdom of the elders who have long since passed away. The library is the main resource to keep all these documents and files for the future reference of the children and youth of Denendeh.

A video has been prepared on the Dene Nation Library, with the assistance of the Health Program of Dene Nation. The tape was professionally produced by Pido Productions. We would be more than interested in showing this tape to you. We believe it will make you understand better what we do in the library. If you would like to see this video, please let us know and we will arrange a time during the Assembly - probably in the evening - to show it to you.

We have also prepared a kit about the library. Unfortunately we only have 15 copies, which we will distribute to the Regional Chiefs and Leadership. If additional copies are required, please leave your name with us and we will arrange to send you a copy.

Mahsi Cho for your time and listening to my presentation.

RESOLUTION

DENE NATION NATIONAL ASSEMBLY, FORT FRANKLIN, JULY, 1985

Resolution

RE: DENE NATION LIBRARY AND INFORMATION SERVICES

WHEREAS the Dene Nation Library in Yellowknife has collected a large amount of material about native people and their struggles for self-determination.

AND WHEREAS there is still a great deal of material left to organize.

AND WHEREAS this material has proved very valuable to all departments of the Dene National office in their work.

AND WHEREAS this material is also significant to future generations of the Dene.

AND WHEREAS the library could also provide these and other services to the Dene communities, as a long-term goal.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Dene National Assembly supports the work of the Library and Information Services section of the Dene National Office.

AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that it continue to provide core financial support for the Library and Information Services section of the Dene National Office.

MOVED BY Cec MacCauley

SECONDED BY Antoine Mowat

CARRIED passed unanimously

DATE July 13/85 7:25 pm

DATE DUE

99999 Pam:026/027:(*440)
ABEL

ABEL, Alice
Dene Nation National Assembly,
Fort Franklin, July/85

Borrower's Name

Date Due

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